

Firefighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union

CALIFORNIA INFERNO

Firefighters on the frontline in LA

See p8

MEET THE NEW
GENERAL SECRETARY
See p14

NEW RESEARCH ON
GRENFELL AND HEALTH
See p16

A FIREFIGHTER'S JOURNEY
TO THE HIMALAYAS
See p18

February-March 2025



www.fbu.org.uk

It's a new era for the Fire Brigades Union. I joined the fire service in 2001, and I've represented members at every level of our union. It is an honour to have been elected as your general secretary, and regardless of how you voted, I will fight for you every day. I would also like to pay tribute to Matt Wrack, my predecessor, who served the FBU with dedication for 20 years.

During the campaign, and while in post, I have travelled the length and breadth of the UK talking to firefighters and fire control staff. The message they sent me was clear: it's time to unite and to deliver, on investment, public safety and health, safety and wellbeing.

WILDFIRES

The cover story of this magazine – Southern California's disastrous wildfires – gives an important angle on one of my key early priorities: investment. The inferno that swept through LA and the area around it (see page 8) is a sobering reminder of how quickly our planet is changing.

To meet the challenge of the climate crisis, the fire service will need a major

boost to funding. But since 2010, we have lost one in five firefighter jobs. Sadly, the current government's first local government funding settlement (see page 4) amounts to another real-terms cut to the fire service.

We urge them to think again – and we urge FBU

To meet the challenge of the climate crisis, the fire service will need a major funding boost



Steve Wright

Getting to work

members to make their voices heard at local council and fire authority meetings in the coming weeks.

MENTAL HEALTH

With our DECON campaign, the FBU has already shown that we can change the conversation in our sector when it comes to health, safety and wellbeing.

Now, we are looking to do the same for mental health – and all FBU members have a part to play. To start our campaign on mental health, we need to create a body of evidence which we can use to inform policy and shift the discussion.



Did you know?

Firefighting breathing apparatus was first developed in the early 1900s. These models were based on the principle of a deep-sea diving suit, with air entering a sealed 'smoke helmet' through tubes and bellows.

In order to do this, ten thousand FBU members will need to participate in a survey conducted by academics at the University of Central Lancashire (see Noticeboard, p22). Please complete the survey as soon as possible.

INJURY TO FEELINGS

I am delighted to report that the first Injury to Feelings payments are beginning to be made to a large proportion of the first wave of claimants as part of the FBU's legal victory over discrimination in the government's pensions reforms. We hope to make progress on releasing the rest of the first wave imminently, and on other claimants in the coming period.

This has been a long time coming, and I would like to thank members for their patience, and FBU staff members as well as National Officer Mark Rowe for their tireless work on this issue.

A FAREWELL

Finally, this is the first edition of *Firefighter* magazine in 25 years that was not laid up by Alan Slingsby. On behalf of the FBU, I would like to thank Alan for his many years of service to the union, without which this magazine would not be such a success. We wish him all the best for the future.



Steve Wright joins the 'silent walk' in memory of Grenfell and calling for justice



8



5



14



18



In this issue

February/March 2025

NEWS

- 4** Fire and rescue still faces funding cuts
- 5** Crews of three, Gloucestershire shifts
- 6** Report on 'culture of fear' in Welsh services
- 7** FBU urges Labour to deliver on rights

FEATURES

- 8 Like a bad dream**
Helen Hague reports on the devastating wildfires that tore through southern California
- 14 Meet the general secretary**
Steve Wright, the new FBU general secretary, sits down with Francis Beckett
- 16 Exposed**
New research on Grenfell's health impacts
- 18 Journey to the Himalayas**
Firefighter Rhys Fitzgerald takes on Everest

REGULARS

- 20 Equalities** LGBT+ History Month
- 21 Meet the rep** Kate Yhnell
- 21 What's new?** Firefighting robots
- 22 Noticeboard** and President's Dispatch
- 23 Station Cat** Case of the missing stairs
- 24 Long service badges**

Firefighter

Published by the Fire Brigades Union
Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames KT2 7AE

www.fbu.org.uk

Production team: Michael Chessum,
Alice Dann, Lisa Irving, Gabriella Matkin
and Tom Walker

Cover image:
Ethan Swope/AP

Print: Walstead
Roche, Victoria
Business Park,
Saint Austell
PL26 8LX

Firefighter is mailed in
a 100% compostable
wrapper. Please do not
recycle the wrapper
but dispose of it in your
home compost heap,
your garden waste or
food waste bin.



PEFC
PEFC/16-33-582

PEFC Certified

This magazine is
printed on paper from
sustainably managed
forests

www.pefc.co.uk

NEWS

BULLYING IN WALES

Independent reports reveal extent of failures in senior management



P6

WORKERS' RIGHTS

The FBU is urging the Labour government to deliver on new rights



P7



This year's funding rise is lower than inflation

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

Fire and rescue services in England still face government funding cuts

Fire and rescue services in England face a real-terms cut to central government funding, with a below inflation increase of 1.4% this year.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government publishes the amount of funding local authorities receive annually, which includes funds for fire and rescue services. Figures for the financial year 2025-26 were published on 3 February, when inflation

stood at 2.5% according to the consumer price index.

Central funding in England will still be less than £1 billion for 2025-2026, which is lower than funding a decade ago.

This funding from Westminster is combined with locally raised revenue from councils. In England, central funding was cut by more than 30% in cash terms alone between 2013 and 2020. Increases since have been small and below inflation, amounting to

continued cuts. In 2010, 50% of fire service funding came from a central pot. This has been reduced to less than 40% of fire and rescue income, driving local cuts.

Last year, fire authorities were allocated an average of £986.1 million, which has only increased to £999.5 million despite continued pressures of inflation.

Cornwall has been allocated the lowest increase, at 1.1%, and London the highest with 1.5%.

Northumberland, North

Yorkshire, Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire, East Sussex, Devon and Somerset will be receiving a 1.2% increase.

Services with a 1.3% increase include Durham, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, West Midlands, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Dorset and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Oxfordshire, Surrey, Warwickshire and West Sussex get less central funding, but keep more local raised revenue under a deal brokered during austerity.

Some fire authorities may put up local council taxes and business rates to maintain budgets, as ministers have allowed local councils to do so.

Funding in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is devolved and calculated separately.

Commenting on the funding settlement FBU general secretary Steve Wright urged the government to invest in the fire service. "Any further cuts to fire services are cuts to public safety, and FBU members will be making that case to fire authorities across the country" he said, calling on Starmer to "go after the super rich and big business, rather than asking workers and the public to stomach more cuts".

Challenge to 'crews of three'

Firefighters in Staffordshire have launched a public petition in the fight back against a dangerous policy allowing retained firefighters to attend incidents as a team of three.

The service has pushed ahead with the policy despite 130 firefighters involved in the trial signing a letter in opposition.

The FBU has criticised the public consultation used to approve the policy, describing it as “misleading” and “deeply flawed” after low engagement from Staffordshire residents.

The petition, which firefighters are calling on members of the public to sign, demands that Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

(PFCC) Ben Adams reverses the decision.

Martin Starkey, FBU Staffordshire brigade secretary, said: “The service claims that they have the backing for this incredibly unsafe policy, but this does not stand up to scrutiny.

“Firefighters have made their opposition clear and low engagement in the consultation – which included questions deliberately framed to elicit a specific answer – demonstrates that there is no widespread popular support for crews of three.

“We will keep on fighting this until Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service puts firefighter and public safety first.”



Sounding Off

Putting out the fires lit by far-right arsonists

Shaka Hislop, former Premier League footballer and president of Show Racism the Red Card, on the importance of anti-racist education

As I reflect on the last year, the racist riots that shook the UK last summer serve as a reminder of how far we still have to go. It was a frightening time for us all, including firefighters on the frontline putting out fires set by far-right arsonists.

We were forced to confront the ugliest side of humanity, recognise the fragility of peace, and of progress. And how easily violence against people of colour is excused by so many. But it also served as a reminder as to why we wake up each day determined to change the world.

Those who have supported Show Racism the Red Card over the years know that anti-racist educational work is life-changing – but it can test you in ways that progress really shouldn't.

We have learned how to find moments of silence to regroup, finding lessons in the darkest of times. Let this be no different.

ROLE MODELS

As role models in our communities – footballers or firefighters – we have the power to stand up against racism, and empower others to do so.

Whilst funding is hard to come by, we have always managed to grow our organisation to empower more people to challenge racism in sport and far beyond. I have no doubt we'll do so again with the FBU and others by our side. And lobbying efforts, urging the government to include anti-racism education as part of the curriculum, must go on.

Let 2024 not be defined by bigotry, but by how our communities stood together. Our work continues.

■ Show Racism the Red Card is an educational charity working with footballers to challenge racism in sport and society. Visit www.theredcard.org

GLOUCESTERSHIRE



Gloucestershire firefighters and supporters protest

Firefighters hit back at 'unfair' shifts

Gloucestershire firefighters are fighting back against changes to their working hours forced through by the county council.

The changes voted through on 4 December would see shifts changed from 9-hour days and 15-hour nights to 11-hour days and 13-hour nights for wholtime community fire stations.

The Fire Brigades Union has argued that the new shifts will likely disproportionately affect caregivers, with many facing leaving the service due to being unable to afford increased

childcare costs to cover longer shifts. Members met on 12 February to discuss their next steps in the campaign.

Kate Yhnell, FBU Gloucestershire brigade organiser, said: “Instead of following in the footsteps of neighbouring brigades offering more family-friendly policies, Gloucestershire employers are choosing to penalise those with caring responsibilities.

“It is unjust and firefighters are not willing to accept this decision. We are ready to fight this until the plans are withdrawn.”



WALES

Report exposes 'culture of fear' and sexism in two Welsh services

Independent reports into North Wales and Mid and West Wales fire and rescue services have revealed the extent of failures in senior management.

Mid and West Wales service was described as a 'boys club', with nearly half of survey respondents reporting personal experiences with bullying and harassment in the service since June 2021.

Firefighters reported a 'culture of fear and mistrust'. Bullying and harassment also remains "widespread" in North Wales fire service, with 42% of survey respondents reporting personal experiences since June 2021.

Nepotism was found to be rife, with reports of intimidation and abuses of power from senior leaders.

Days before the publication, North Wales deputy chief Stewart Forshaw was suspended pending investigation into an allegedly homophobic social media post.

Gareth Tovey, FBU executive council member for Wales, called for action "to tackle misogyny in both services" in response to findings that 10% of women reported experiencing sexual harassment in Mid and West Wales service. "Fire services in Wales are in desperate need of lasting change at the top, and the Welsh government must listen to the voice of the frontline," he said.

"We cannot expect the same leaderships who have presided over these problems to solve them – and the FBU is ready to play a leading role in transforming our service."

Ben Selby, FBU assistant general secretary, highlighted that these reports are not isolated. "Fire service leaders are failing to protect workforces across the UK" he said. "We need to transform how fire services are run, with professional standards to hold services to account."

GRENFELL FIRE

Call for firefighter health monitoring

Steve Wright, FBU general secretary, has written to the department of health and the home office calling for urgent health checks for firefighters following the latest research into the impact of exposure to fire contaminants.

In January, the University of Central Lancashire found that 136 of the 524 firefighters exposed to smoke at the Grenfell Tower fire reported

life-changing health conditions three years later.

In the letter, Wright calls for ministers to set a date for a meeting on the issue of firefighters' exposure to contaminants, and for the government to support the demand for regular health monitoring.

■ See page 16 for more on the study

In brief

PALESTINE FIRE ENGINE BLOCKED

The fire appliance donated to Palestine by the FBU continues to be held by Israeli authorities at the port of Ashdod.

FBU members in Scotland sourced and refitted a fire engine, loading it with medical supplies, to be shipped to Nablus in the West Bank.

Stephen Gethins MP and Brian Leishman MP have both raised early day motions in Westminster calling for the release of the donation, which has been impounded since August despite all of having the necessary paperwork.

An open letter organised by FBU and Unison members has now gained 100 signatories, including several MPs and trade unions.



The FBU fire engine and medical kit donated to Palestinian firefighters. It has been impounded by Israeli authorities since August last year

INJURY TO FEELINGS PAYMENTS

The first 'injury to feelings' compensation payments are now being made to the first wave of FBU members who made an age-discrimination claim.

Mark Rowe, FBU national officer, said: "These payouts are a result of the FBU's legal victory on pensions, with thanks to Thompsons solicitors. The FBU will keep members up to date with the progress for the next wave of payments, and with our wider fight for pensions justice."



RMT union members protesting against fire-and-rehire and for better terms and conditions

New FBU general secretary Steve Wright has used his first weeks in office to urge the government to deliver on a package of promises on workers' rights as quickly as possible.

The Workers' Rights Bill, which was published in October last year, would improve workers' rights across the economy.

Crucially from the FBU's perspective, the Bill would repeal the Minimum Service Levels Act, which could prevent firefighters from taking strike action even where they have voted democratically to do so.

NO WATERING DOWN

However, there are signs that big business interests will lobby to have key measures watered down.

The FBU played an important role, alongside other unions, in getting Labour to adopt its workers' rights pledges ahead of the 2024 general election.

Now, the union is applying pressure to have them delivered. In an interview with LBC, Steve Wright



News Focus

FBU urges Labour to deliver on workers' rights

issued a direct call to Keir Starmer: "I think the message from the trade unions is: start delivering for working people, and delivering for firefighters who do a great job in their communities."

Speaking to the Independent, he added: "A properly paid workforce that is better protected against unfair dismissal and has

more secure employment is critical to delivering greater growth.

"With the bill due to pass through parliament in a matter of weeks, the government must ensure the legislation on workers' rights is in place much faster than the planned timeframe of autumn 2026."

Wright met with Keir Starmer in February alongside other union leaders to put the case to the prime minister directly.

The Bill is due to come back to parliament in the coming months. Unions including the FBU will be campaigning to defend and strengthen it.

'The message from the trade unions is: start delivering for working people, for firefighters'

WHAT'S IN THE BILL?

The Employment Rights Bill currently includes:

- Scrapping some of the most recent anti-trade union laws
- Day one rights to unfair dismissal protection, parental leave and more
- The right to a contract reflecting normal hours of work
- Making 'fire and rehire' more difficult
- Establishing the Fair Work Agency
- A Fair Pay Agreement in adult social care
- Reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body
- Increased protection from sexual harassment; gender and menopause action plans; and more rights for pregnant workers
- Wide-ranging reviews including on parental leave, paid carers' leave, the single status of worker, health and safety guidance, and the right to switch off

L.A. WILDFIRES

LIKE A

Helen Hague reports on the devastating wildfires
that tore through Southern California in January

BAD *DREAM*



The Palisades Fire destroys
a neighbourhood in the
Pacific Palisades, Los
Angeles, on 7 January 2025

ETHAN SWOPE/AP

On 7 January, ferocious desert winds tore through parched terrain in southern California, powering two of the most destructive wildfires in the state's history, turning neighbourhoods to ash, and leaving many thousands homeless.

First, a fire ripped through Pacific Palisades – one of the wealthiest enclaves in the United States, awash with celebrities. There, as firefighters fought huge blazes leaping from house to house, the emphasis was very much on rescue.

Propelled by gusts, embers were carried up to a mile in advance of the flames, setting more homes on fire. Earlier, 200 abandoned cars were blocking Sunset Boulevard, preventing firefighters from tackling the flames. A fire department bulldozer soon shifted them so rescuers could get through.

Hours after the Palisades blaze first started, the Eaton fire swept through the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains, reaching the town of Altadena, leaving homes in ashes and lives in chaos as it spread rapidly through foothill neighbourhoods.

The first firefighters to arrive faced gruelling conditions and shifts of up to 48 hours – there were no seasonal staff. And gusting winds meant that many aircraft, which would usually have been used to spray water on the billowing flames, were grounded.

The fires – and others that sparked and spread in the area soon after – wouldn't have happened if there was still a limited "fire season" in Southern California. By January, rains would have doused the shrivelled vegetation and combustible scrub that fed the flames. It now looks like the fire season can last all year.

FIREFIGHTERS' HOMES BURN

Firefighters who've spent their working lives saving people and property from flames don't get special protection when wildfires blaze. At least twelve lost their own homes.

Pasadena Fire Department firefighter Charlie Hawes was fighting blazes close to his parents' home, where he lived with his two-year-old son Liam. He noticed that it was on fire.

"It was kind of like a fever dream where just everything was on fire,"



A firefighter sprays down a burning house on January 7 in Pacific Palisades

"As soon as I put out one fire, the next one starts"

Charlie said. "I walked up the street and could see my parents' whole roof was on fire. I felt so helpless... we're supposed to be fixers in this job, and that wasn't the case that night."

Hawes's family escaped safely but the home was destroyed. "There's nothing. It just takes the breath out of you. The hard part is losing the sentimental things. [But] we're never gonna lose the memories."

Capt. Jerry Pugh is a 22-year veteran of the LAFD and his son, Adrian, is a probationary firefighter. Their home in Altadena was destroyed. Jerry said: "I've never seen anything like this. It's like battling a hurricane, but instead of water it's flames."

Jerry recalled being woken up at 3.30am by the smell of smoke. He took a drive to investigate and was shocked by what he saw. "It was a pouring rain of embers — and that's when I realised that the wind was blowing in the exact direction of my house. It very quickly got to the point where I realised we don't stand a chance."

Facts

The January 2025 Southern California wildfires were one of the worst natural disasters in US history. Tragically, at least 29 people have been confirmed dead – and dozens are still missing. The financial damage is also massive, estimated at between \$250 billion and \$275 billion.



MICHAEL NIGRO/PACIFIC PRESS

He packed up his family and fled. Just a few hours later, his home was nothing but rubble. Jerry added: "I went back every morning for two to three days thinking I was going to find different results," he said. "I was thinking, OK, maybe this is not true, maybe it's a bad dream."

"I JUST BROKE DOWN"

George Baxter believed he had left his firefighting days behind when he retired after 30 years of service. Then the Eaton fire – which scorched more than 57 square kilometres east of Los Angeles before it was controlled – sent him on a final mission to save his own home in Altadena.

"I was probably the only person on my street that did not evacuate," George told the *LA Times*. "But being a stubborn firefighter, I'm going to try to defend my property."

Overnight from 11pm on 7 January, George stood in his yard armed with a garden hose and fought the flames. "My fence is on fire, the tree is on fire, my car tire is on fire," he said. "So I'm running around like a chicken with his head cut off, and as soon as I put out one fire, the next one starts."



JAEC. HONG/AP

Firefighters drop water on the Palisades Fire in Mandeville Canyon on 11 January



The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection reports

51,818

emergency responses

331

wildfires

57,637

acres burned

**At least
29**
fatalities



The house across the street caught on fire, causing all of the guns stored inside to start exploding. "It felt like a war zone. All the rounds of ammunition are going off, and now I'm worried about getting hit by bullets."

His nephew finally persuaded him to admit defeat and go to hospital, because his eyes were burning from the smoke, and he couldn't see.

When he saw photos of his home, he "just broke down in tears. I could not believe my house of 30 years was burned to the ground."

APOCALYPSE AT HOLLYWOOD

Joe Ten Eyck heads up the IAFF's Wildlife/Urban-Interface Fire Programs. It has a brief to help equip firefighters with the skills and equipment they need to tackle wildfires and save lives and property.

A former incident commander, Joe has been helping fight fires in California for 40 years and has witnessed some extremely destructive fires in his long career. But even he wasn't prepared for the "dark devastation" he encountered driving down Sunset Boulevard after the Palisades fire torched through town. "It looked like a nuclear winter – everything levelled, so much destruction". A real-life apocalyptic drama was playing out near Hollywood, leaving gutted buildings and abandoned cars.

Eighty five per cent of "fire communities" in North America are represented the International

MICHAEL HO WAI LEE/SOPA IMAGES



The fires, carried by high winds, spread from house to house across a wide area

Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), an influential union representing firefighters, emergency medical workers and rescue. Its 353,000 members also belong to affiliated unions in states and counties. It has 35,000 members in California.

MORE RESOURCES NEEDED

In the wake of January's catastrophic fires, the call for more firefighters and better resources is getting louder. Freddy Esobar, president of the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City has long warned there aren't enough firefighters to cope with the increasing

threat of wildfires. Just a month before the January fires, he told LA City officials that staffing in the Los Angeles Fire Department was "dire" – and that "someone will die".

Now, calls for more staff and resources are ramping up. Los Angeles fire chief Anthony Marrone told a press conference that the region's firefighters were not prepared for "this kind of widespread disaster". "There are not enough firefighters in LA county," he said.

The IAFF is also concerned about the potential health impacts on firefighters who responded to the



A firefighter battles the fire around a burned structure in the Pacific Palisades on 8 January

California wildfires, and is working with the University of California to research the long term effects in those who attended.

Parallels with the FBU's DECON campaign are striking. Announcing the research, the IAFF's chief scientific advisor, Dr Derek Urwin, said: "We need to make post-exposure bio-monitoring routine after these events. Right now, we're using grant funding to make this possible, but it's critical that we integrate this kind of work into our standard approaches moving forward."

THE TIP OF AN ICEBERG

The evidence is stark. Wildfires in California are growing in size and intensity, posing more risks to people and homes. Chillingly, people are starting to ask if the scale of destruction seen in LA in January will, like the

Firefighters in the UK are already facing bigger wildfires, and the risk is growing

year-long fire season, become the new normal in the region.

Firefighters in the UK are already facing bigger wildfires, and the risk is growing, including in built-up areas. On 19 July 2022, the London Fire Brigade responded to 2,496 calls in a single day, and when commanders tried to increase attendance at incidents they were told that appliances were not available. Wennington, in east London, had 19 houses destroyed by wild grassland fires.

We could well be at the tip of an iceberg. As the climate crisis intensifies, extreme weather events will become more and more common. After 15 years of cuts, in which the UK fire and rescue service lost one in five firefighter jobs, the public is entitled to ask whether there will be adequate resources to respond when needed.

MEET THE

General Secretary

Steve Wright, the union's newly elected general secretary, sat down with **Francis Beckett** to discuss his fire service background, politics, and what's next

Last year Steve Wright's son became a third generation operational firefighter. "For all my early life we lived in the shadow of a fire station, in a fire brigade house" says Steve. "My father joined the fire service in the 1970s. And my son has always been around it too. When I served at Didcot fire station, we lived right across the road."

As a firefighter, the family history gives Steve a sense of continuity. As a trade unionist, it drives him, because among the proud memories there's a very sad one. His father died aged only 64, of lung cancer, following decades of exposure to fire contaminants on the job.

"We need to protect firefighters from contaminants, to reduce the risk of cancer," he says. "And I won't rest until that risk is properly recognised, so that firefighters are better protected at work and receive regular health monitoring. We know that would save lives."

CLOSE TO HEART

Now aged 42, Wright joined the fire service in Buckinghamshire in 2001, when he was 18, and was operational for more than 20 years. Becoming a watch manager in Oxfordshire, he was taught

Steve Wright with his son, a third generation firefighter



Steve on a picket during the 2015 strikes against pension cuts



lessons you can't learn any other way. He was on duty for a major incident at Didcot Power Station in 2016, which required a dozen fire engines and 60 firefighters. "The building collapsed, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. Going to incidents like that weighs heavily on you afterwards."

"You never know what you're going to face when the bell rings. But firefighting is all about working in a team while facing danger head on, leaving no-one behind. You build real trust. In a life-or-death situation, you come to really understand the meaning

of leadership. Those skills have always been part of our strength as a union."

POLITICS

Wright is the ninth general secretary to be elected in the union's one hundred- and seven-year history.

"Firefighters have always fought for justice for workers, in the fire and rescue service and beyond. I'm proud to have been elected to continue this tradition."

He cites the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy, and the union's ongoing campaign against the deregulation of building and fire safety standards. "The building safety crisis impacts the firefighters who may face a fire in a dangerous tower block, but it's also part of a bigger picture: austerity, standards of living, deep inequality."

While he'll no doubt be busy getting his feet under the desk, he lists his top three priorities as "investment, public safety, firefighter safety." This includes fighting on pay, pensions justice, and better terms and conditions.

And with the rise of extreme weather events, Wright is keen to stress that proper fire service funding is more important than ever.

"For the first time in fifteen years, we are knocking on the door of a Labour government. This comes with real opportunities, but I'm not naïve about it: I know we won't be handed anything without a fight."

"I'll be pushing for our seat at the table at every chance. But that's only one part of the job. The other will be to support and empower members to take action and build that pressure. That's how we'll make headway."

ON THE FIRE STATION

During the election campaign, he spoke to firefighters across the country at visits to more than 85 fire stations and fire control rooms.

"It was useful to have those conversations, and the same issues were cutting through. I want to ensure I'm there as general secretary for all members." The fundamental issue is lack of investment, he says, with more than 12,000 firefighter jobs cut and central funding slashed by 30 per cent since 2010.

"I'm going to make sure I'm seen on the ground," he says. "I pledged to visit every regional committee in my first 12 months, and I'll spend weekends visiting fire stations. My son, who lives at home, will be the first to tell me if I am not delivering."

A man with short brown hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, dark blue trousers, and brown leather shoes, stands with his hands clasped in front of a red London Fire Brigade truck. The truck features yellow reflective stripes, a white crown logo, and the text 'LFB LONDON FIRE'. The man is looking directly at the camera.

Wright joined the fire service
in Buckinghamshire in 2001
at the age of 18

**"We are knocking at
the door of a Labour
government – but I
know we won't be
handed anything
without a fight"**

On 3 January, a team of world-leading fire scientists published research on firefighter health that made headline news. In black and white, printed on the front page of the *Guardian*, was a figure that was impossible to ignore: one in four firefighters who attended the Grenfell Tower fire are now suffering from health disorders.

This sparked a national conversation about the aftermath of the tragedy. But beyond the headlines, this story exposes an urgent need for better protections for UK firefighters.

Following decades of neglect, the government and fire service employers have no excuses left to hide behind.

ONE IN FOUR

The figures are shocking but, sadly, not surprising. The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) found that 136 firefighters who attended the Grenfell Tower fire are now suffering from long-term health disorders: 26% of those surveyed.

Respondents reported 301 health disorders in total, with many experiencing multiple health issues. These include 66 cases of digestive diseases, 64 respiratory diseases, 22 neurological diseases, and 11 cancer diagnoses.

The team of UCLan academics behind the findings included professors Anna Stec, David Purser and Richard Hull, leading experts in the

fields of fire science and toxicology. Professor Anna Stec described the results as concerning. "Although it is not possible to definitively trace any disease back to a single incident, it is alarming that a high proportion of the firefighters who were exposed to very high smoke levels that night are now falling ill."

This is the first study of its kind. And since no-one had previously compiled data on exposures and the impact on firefighters at this major disaster, the FBU assisted with gathering this crucial information.

In total, 524 of the 628 firefighters present in the initial 20 hours of the fire were included.

THICK, ACRID SMOKE

The scientists found that firefighters at the incident were exposed to smoke with gases and particulate matter at a far higher levels than the limit set by the Health and Safety Executive. Many experienced immediate symptoms including choking, difficulty breathing and vomiting on the night.

And, significantly, over three times as many firefighters who were exposed to smoke during the incident reported digestive and respiratory diseases in the three years following, compared to those who were not exposed.

Due to the severity of the incident, the frontline faced an unprecedented situation where operational safety protocols were difficult to follow. Many spent time in the tower without

New ground-breaking research has uncovered the health impact of firefighters' exposure to smoke at the Grenfell Tower fire. Firefighter reports

Grenfell firefighters exposed to toxic smoke developed health disorders, study finds

Exclusive: Data from 524 firefighters who risked their lives showed 136 reported life-changing conditions



Press coverage in the *Guardian* for the new firefighters' health study





activated breathing apparatus, risking their health and lives while doing everything in their power to rescue residents. 89% reported not wearing respiratory protective equipment at some point during their activities.

This was the result of the tower having been turned into a death-trap by decades of deregulation. While the crisis in building safety continues to put high-rise residents' lives at risk, unpredictable and dangerous buildings remain a threat to firefighter health and safety.

A CLEARER PICTURE

We know that exposure to fire effluents increases firefighters' risk of developing cancers and other diseases over time.

Professor Anna Stec has joined the call for a health monitoring programme. "Given that firefighting is classified as a carcinogenic occupation by the World Health Organisation and is associated with higher mortalities from rare cancers, introducing regular health monitoring for UK firefighters is essential."

In the years following 9/11, a lifetime health programme was set up for those who lived,

Over three times as many firefighters who were exposed to smoke during the Grenfell fire reported health problems in the three years afterwards, compared to those who were not exposed

worked or went to school in the area around where the towers collapsed, and for workers who participated for one day in rescue and recovery efforts.

While these firefighters experienced an increased risk of disease, regular screenings allowed for early detection and treatment. As a result, the majority of those diagnosed with cancer 5–10 years ago are still alive today.

Despite this precedent, no sustained health programme was put in place after the Grenfell Tower fire.

FAILINGS LAID BARE

Responding to the research, then-health minister Andrew Gwynne told LBC radio that the government needs to "look seriously" at the issue and that it would be raised with the fire minister Diana Johnson.

What happened at the Grenfell Tower has implications for all firefighters, showing the importance of preventing exposure to smoke and the urgent need for health interventions.

In light of the latest findings, the union continues to call for a programme of health monitoring to be rolled out across the UK, and for all those exposed at the Grenfell Tower fire.

And FBU members have never had a stronger case for fighting for decontamination procedures, equipment and kit at every fire station to prevent exposures to toxic contaminants.

GRENELL

Rhys on a previous climb, tackling the Ama Dablam mountain in the eastern Himalayas



A firefighter's journey to the HIMALAYAS

Steve Morgan spoke to Welsh firefighter Rhys Fitzgerald as he gears up to raise money for charity by climbing Mount Everest

A seven-year itch is one thing. For Rhys Fitzgerald, the seventh anniversary of joining the Fire Service is becoming a scratch. The softly-spoken 28-year-old, a retained firefighter for Mid and West Wales in his native Kidwelly since 2018, is gearing up for the trip of a lifetime – scaling Mount Everest, wait for it, in a firefighting suit.

He has already made a significant dent in his preparation, spending the back end of 2024 in Nepal scaling the small matter of Ama Dablam's 8,612 metre summit, where temperatures drop to between minus 17 and 20 degrees near the top. Next in his sights is the big one – Mount Everest's 8,849m. In lay person's terms, that's about five-and-a-half miles upward. If successful, a place in history beckons as the first person to do it sporting a firefighter's tunic (worn, he is keen to point out, over an exhibition-approved summit suit).

ON A MISSION

He realises that, to the outside world, it must all look pretty extreme. For Rhys, though, this is the achievement of a boyhood dream; the logical extension of a life spent feeling most at home in the great outdoors. "I've always been the busy one," he laughs. "Getting up at stupid o'clock for summer or winter sunrises. And when you're climbing up a mountain at the crack of dawn, with a clear sky and the stars, there's just something about that – you never feel more alive."

He catches himself briefly, wary of sounding like 'well, a bit of a hippy'. The reality is anything but: the effort and logistics required for the trip require a clear head and steely insides, something

every good firefighter can relate to. Another big driver is the desire to do something good, to make a difference. The trio of beneficiaries from his trip are the Firefighters Charity, mental health charity MIND and the Nimsdai Foundation, which looks to help young climbers and guides.

GETTING PREPARED

Having originally planned to go this spring, the trip has been put back to the next climbing season – April 2026. That will allow Rhys more precious time to raise the £45,000, a vertiginous sum in itself. "I'm just hoping that no other fanatic gets wind of it in the meantime and jumps in before me," he laughs.

Until then, he will be hard at the day job in Kidwelly, juggling the demands of callouts and community work with his visions of taming Everest. As an asthmatic child, it had appeared unlikely. "I'd always thought it was impossible for me," he says. "It was always a dream that seemed too far away. But over the years, the way things have worked out, I've got nearer, through scouts, air cadets, always being outdoors, and it escalated from being just hobby stuff."

Rhys has previously taken part in the Welsh Three Peaks Challenge (Snowdon, Cadair Idris and Pen Y Fan:

"When you're climbing with a clear sky and the stars, you never feel more alive"

17 miles in 24 hours), as well as leading groups on mountain trips.

November's excursion to Ama Dablam – a five-day trek up to base camp – was a great primer. Before his departure, he'd spent hours scouring YouTube, watching documentaries to get up on what he might find. "It was the first time I've done any fixed, complex mountaineering," he says. "But having previous experience of local climbs, doing some rope work and general climbing with the fire service, you feel confident enough to put it into practice. I must have shown I was confident enough, because my guide said: 'I trust you, crack on!'"

MENTAL HEALTH

Though Everest presents markedly different technical tests for climbers, Rhys hopes his deeds can help inspire others to seek the rewards from rising to a challenge, however big or small. And on a personal level, the rarified mountain air is just something special. "You're just so conscious of being in the moment – the simple things that can take you away from, or ease the struggles you've got," he says.

Discussions around mental health remain a sensitive topic – not least in a profession where toughness is a given – but things are certainly improving. Rhys knows he has plenty of support in his desire to change that conversation. "Some of my mates think I'm a bit crazy, with all my dreams and that, but they're all behind it and have said they'll help out wherever they can."

As the old saying goes, it's good to have friends in high places...

■ Find out more and donate to Rhys' fundraiser: bit.ly/4jB3eHe

As Trump's America turns back the clock, LGBT+ history is more important than ever

Maria Buck, acting secretary of the FBU's LGBT+ section, on trade union solidarity against the far right

LGBT+ History Month in the UK was founded in 2005 by Schools Out, a group of LGBT+ activists from teachers' trade unions. The month of February is a time when we celebrate the lives, achievements and contributions that LGBT+ people have made to our collective history.

As we observe what is happening in the USA now, many LGBT+ people are fearful about what the future holds. Events like LGBT+ history month are coming under attack along with initiatives around equality, diversity and inclusion.

Minorities are being scapegoated and demonised while rights and protections are being stripped away.

We have witnessed such tactics in the past. Politicians spin narratives blaming vulnerable demographics for issues in society, making them into figures of fear or hatred. Then when the minority is attacked, by politicians or on the streets, people fail to intervene and become complicit.

Some may feel that what is happening in the USA doesn't affect us, but we can't afford to be complacent. The people who are pulling the political strings in America – the far right – have already started interfering in UK politics.

A HOPEFUL ALTERNATIVE

We've seen Elon Musk's comments on X, stoking division and racism with statements like "civil war is inevitable". The same political project has made LGBT+ targets, with Westminster rowing back on trans rights. They aim to divide us because we are stronger when we stand united.

A lack of trust in established political parties has led to voters seeking an alternative, and the far-right has capitalised on that. It is receiving enormous financial and media support from billionaires. Those billionaires are no friend to the working class and have gained their wealth from the exploitation of ordinary people.



Trade unionists and anti-racists protest against the far right last year

The people who are pulling the political strings in America have already started interfering in UK politics

It is our role within the trade union movement to offer a better alternative: of workers' unity, justice and hope. We will defend LGBT+ history month as a time to remember and learn from those who have faced and overcome these struggles before us.

The FBU LGBT+ section is in a period of transition with the retirement of long-standing secretary Pat Carberry. Until elections can be held, Maria Buck, the previous committee chair, is acting as secretary and Andrew Steel is acting as the committee chair.

Together we can stand against division and hatred. Whether you're new to the LGBT+ community or the union, you can help shape our section and our service.

Speak to your region's LGBT+ rep or reach out the committee to find out more about how you can get involved as an LGBT+ FBU member or ally.



Meet the rep

Kate Yhnell, Gloucestershire organiser
and South West women's rep

What made you want to become a rep?

I wanted to support firefighters and their families. When the person who had been leading the union locally for a long time retired, someone had to step up. I figured that you can't always have the easier, quieter lifestyle – sometimes you just have to take the fight on...

Gloucestershire has highest population of women firefighters in the UK, but the worst level of maternity pay. The Fight for 52 campaign is really important, and I've heard from many women in the service how much it can impact you to be forced back to firefighting too soon after birth.

What is your proudest moment as a rep?

As part of our ongoing campaign around shift pattern changes imposed on firefighters in Gloucestershire, members submitted over 70 handwritten individual letters to councillors.

It's inspiring how members have come together for this campaign, where we're fighting against changes that would impact firefighters with childcare or caring responsibilities. It's been a real display of unity, with women and men in the service taking a stand together. Now we're in a stronger position generally because we've shown that we won't just roll over.

What piece of advice would you give a new rep?

It's always worth getting support from the wider union for a local dispute. In Gloucestershire, we've had great support from metropolitan brigades, the regional committee, reps across the union and head office.

Who are your trade union heroes?

Mick Lynch, RMT general secretary, is a legend. I admire the way he fights for his workers, and he's always ten steps ahead in interviews. I'd love to be able to answer difficult questions in his style.

Describe yourself in three words.

Tenacious, stubborn, competitive

What was the last conversation you had that made you think differently about something?

A friend sent me a quote a few days ago, saying 'Your company culture is not words on your website or posters on the wall. It's how your people feel on a Sunday night.' The same applies to the fire service – most of us are proud to work in it, but staff need to feel valued.

Which TV show could you not live without?

I'll admit it ... Eastenders.



What's new?

Firefighting robots

The first 'firefighting robots' to reach UK shores are being trialled in several fire and rescue services. West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service announced that they were testing new robots in July 2023, while the service in Kent added a robot to their equipment this January.

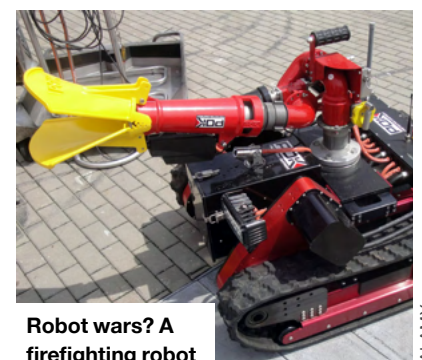
It will be sent to large and complex fires, such as at industrial and commercial sites, where it will be remotely operated to gather video and thermal imaging to identify fire hotspots. It also has a hose attachment for firefighting, audio for communicating instructions, and can pull a stretcher.

Kent's technical rescue team say that the robot will be able to collect intelligence to feed back to crews while they are at a safe distance from a fire, with the aim of improving firefighter safety.

Robots have been used by fire and rescue services in various forms for the past forty years, with varying degrees of capabilities and success.

Downsides include a hefty price tag, with a representative of manufacturer Shark Robotics stating that their robots can cost up to £160,000.

The FBU continues to call for investment in frontline firefighters as a priority, with 1 in 5 firefighters lost to cuts across the UK.



Robot wars? A firefighting robot

ALAMY



President's dispatch

FBU president
Ian Murray on charting
a course for 2025

My congratulations to Steve Wright for his election to the role of general secretary, and thanks and best wishes to Matt Wrack for his work since his election in 2005.

Thanks are also due to those members of the FBU staff team who have opted not to stay with us as the union's head office is relocated. Their dedication and commitment to members have been second to none over the years.

This is a time of change, but also of opportunities. Trade unions now have a seat at the table in pushing for a better deal for workers through the Labour Party's democratic structures.

As the FBU's representative on the governing national executive committee, I will continue to hold Labour's feet to the fire on workers' rights, investment in public services, and rebuilding the fire and rescue service.

YOUR VOICE

And we are approaching a key date in the FBU calendar, with annual conference in May (see 'Conference deadline', right).

This is the democratic heart of the union, with members able to submit resolutions through their brigade and sectional committees. Delegates will then vote to decide on policies and priorities for the coming year.

In politics and in the union, your voice matters.



The Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival, also held in Dorset, follows on from the young members' summer school

UNION DEMOCRACY

General secretary election results

8,648 ballot papers were returned before the general secretary election closed on 14 January 2025. Steve Wright was elected as general secretary with 5,188 votes and Matt Wrack received 3,436 votes.

IMPORTANT NOTICE – ERROR IN BALLOT

It has come to the FBU's attention that 3,155 members were not initially sent ballot papers when the election opened. The Executive Council has referred the matter to the Certification Officer. Members will be informed immediately when the union has received direction from them. It is possible that the election may be re-run. The union apologises unreservedly for this situation. Both candidates, Bro Wrack and Bro Wright, have been informed.

Conference deadline

Brigade committees must submit conference delegates' names, resolution proposals, and amendments to union rules to head office no later than 2pm on 5 March 2025.

Acting vice president

The executive council has appointed Adam Taylor, executive council member for the East Midlands, to the role of acting vice president.

FBU YOUNG MEMBERS

Under-30s invited to young members' summer school

FBU members under 30 are invited to register for a three-day event in Weymouth, Dorset from 16-18 July 2025.

This summer school will bring young members together in an inclusive and friendly environment to develop skills and confidence in getting active in the union, building worker power, and becoming workplace leaders.

This is an opportunity to meet and learn from other young members from across the UK, giving you tools to make the change you want to see in the fire service and in society.

Find out more at:
bit.ly/fbu-youngmembersschool

SURVEY

Mental health survey

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is calling on all active UK firefighters to take part in a national mental health survey. Your input into this ground-breaking research will help identify what is needed to support firefighters' mental health at work.

The anonymous survey takes between 30 – 60 minutes to complete. Take the survey here: <https://redcap.link/37ci3es8> or scan the QR code.





Wright on the Road

■ **18 Jan** Attended the Palestine Solidarity Campaign march in London

■ **23 Jan** Attended meeting with the National Retained Committee

■ **24-25 Jan** Met with fire minister in Yorkshire and Humberside, followed by visits to local fire stations and fire control

■ **27 Jan** Attended Red Plaque event in Liverpool

■ **28 Jan** Represented the union at the Trades Union Coordinating Group in Westminster

■ **30 Jan** Attended the Home Office for a meeting with government depts responsible for fire

■ **1 Feb** Spoke at a national Stand Up to Racism demonstration

■ **4 Feb** Attended a meeting with the Prime Minister at No 10 Downing Street regarding the employment rights bill and fire issues

■ **10 Feb** Visited Paddington fire station for tea break with the on duty watch

■ **12 Feb** Visited a mass members' meeting Gloucestershire for the campaign against shift changes (see page 5)

COMING UP

■ **19 Feb** Speaking on LBC Cross Questions

■ **26 Feb** Attending the LGBT+ section's annual school (see page 20)

The case of the missing stairs

Station Cat on a developer's staircase-dodging plan

You need a second staircase in a high building to provide "additional routes for evacuation and firefighting", mayor Sadiq Khan told the London Assembly. Research has shown that a second staircase halves the time it takes to evacuate a high-rise.

Which is why there is now a requirement for a second staircase in buildings over 18 metres high – such as those in the planned multi-storey, 230 home development at the site of the Blenheim Shopping Centre in Penge, south-east London.

But, mayor Khan added, he is aware that a second staircase "impacts on the design of a building and this in turn affects revenue".

Which may explain why developers Hadley Property Group and Clarion Housing Group found an ingenious way to avoid putting in a second staircase on one of the four blocks. They reduced the height of the building to exactly 30cm under the 18-metre threshold.

In the event of a fire, is it going to be any easier to get people out safely that the building is 30cm lower? Do these 30cm make any difference?

None at all, according to the London Fire Brigade. "The height of the building is identified at 17.7m and is reliant on a single staircase... We do not see this as deferring to the spirit of the guidance used and doesn't ethically

justify this decision." In other blocks in the development, a second staircase is still proposed, but according to LFB "the design for two staircases serving all floors in these blocks is not satisfactory in relation to the relevant guidance used... The proximity of all staircases do not provide a suitable secondary means of escape."

Is this another developer sacrificing safety for profit? Or is there some sort of public interest justification? Do these monster blocks, which, if

there is a major fire, will be hard to escape from, and hard for firefighters to rescue people from, fulfil some sort of local need? Not if you listen to the storm of local protest, which was gathering steam even before the news about the fire danger.

2,300 residents have signed a petition against the plans, which involve five tower blocks up to 18 storeys tall, as well as knocking down the existing shopping centre.

Campaigners say the proposed accommodation is likely to be priced out of the reach of most local residents, with just one third deemed "affordable".

There is also no provision for added amenities for the 1,000 or so new residents – no new school, no doctors' surgery, no new train or bus routes.

Unwanted and dangerous – isn't it time Bromley Council called a halt?



"Keep up the good work...you'll need to"

25-year badges



Gavin Jones (l) receives his 25-year badge from Elm Lane branch secretary Rick Green (r)



Ali Warnock (l), Ilford, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Owen Gunn (r)



Craig Marshbank (r), Spilsby, Lincolnshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Dan Taylor (l)



Justin Cooper (r), white watch, Homerton, London receives his 25-year badge from regional organiser Gareth Cook



Paul Swales (l), white watch, Scarborough, receives his 25-year badge from Carl Stuttard (l) with white watch colleagues



Johnny Thomas (r), green watch, Sale, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Connor Sweetman with watch colleagues



Stuart Blick (r), red watch, Woodgate Valley, West Midlands receives his 25-year badge from borough rep Rob Hawkes (l), with colleague James Toyne



Neil Badham (r), branch rep, Lambeth, London, receives his 25-year badge from South West London area secretary Dave Young (l), with Adam Jones and Adam Hills



Dave Cook (centre), blue watch, Paignton, Devon & Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from organiser Dave Lock (l) with Paignton branch rep Chris Balcombe (r)



Andrew Parsons (l), fire safety, West Sussex receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Peter Horner (r) with Horsham white watch colleagues Paul Stepney, Steve Bridle, Joe Bullingham, James Cameron and William Scott (l-r)



Joe Bullingham (l), fire safety, West Sussex receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Peter Horner (r) with Horsham white watch colleagues



Helen Creek (l), Ops support, Lincolnshire, receives her 25-year badge from brigade secretary Karl Keuneke (r)



Adam Dudfield (l), Kent, receiving his 25-year badge from Aylesham branch rep Dave Miller (r)



Clinton Walsh (r), London, receives his 25-year badge from North East area organiser Dan O'Brien



Sam Bray (r) blue watch, Exeter, Devon & Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from organiser and former watch colleague Dave Lock (l) with Middlemoor fire station colleagues



Dan Searle (r) SM Exeter response group, receives his 25-year badge from organiser Dave Lock (l), with former colleagues at Middlemoor fire station



Andy Dixon (l), west division, and Steve Hogg (r) south division, Lincolnshire, receive their 25-year badges from brigade secretary Karl Keuneke



James Hewitt (r), amber watch, Ayr & Maybole on call, receives his 25-year badge from RDS organiser Kerry McCrone (l)



Galashiels health and safety rep David Hardy (r), amber watch, Galashiels, receives his 25-year badge from east area organiser Iain Poe (l) with colleagues looking on



Shaun Mooney (l) green watch, Bridlington, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Stew Ball, with green watch colleagues looking on



Alex Putman (l), blue watch, Camels Head fire station, Devon & Somerset receives his 25-year badge from brigade women's rep & branch rep Emma Harvey (r)



Craig Stephenson (r) and John Turpin (l), Hunslet white watch West Yorkshire receive their 25-year badges from brigade chair Mathew Herrin



Pete Ballard (l), blue watch, Weston-super-Mare receives his 25-year badge on board the hovercraft from brigade secretary Amanda Mills with blue watch



Rob Farrant (r), red watch, Orpington, London, receives his 25-year badge from rep Barry Jackson, with colleagues Will Manley, Ness Rawlins, Neil Granger, Rob Montgomery, Dan Harris and John Wilkinson (l-r)



Neil Tanner (l), red watch, Dowgate, London receives his 25-year badge from borough rep Joshua Wall (r)



Paul Vickery (l) Amesbury on-call, Dorset and Wiltshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Ray Bridgeman, alongside colleagues (l-r) Dean Porritt, Colin Hatcher and Ryan Smith



Edward Noyce (r), green watch, Crawley, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Pawel Kosla (l), with green watch colleagues Ben Jenner, Bernard Broadway-Mann, Leon Lawlor, Joe Barkley, Ff Casy Poor, Bianca Kelly-Margues and Thomas Hopkins (l-r)



Justin Bayliss (r), Brierley Hill, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Joshua Stanton



Chris Maggs (centre), Bispham, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge with watch colleagues



Lee Atkinson (r), Orsett, Essex receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Matt Edwards (l) with watch colleagues



Tom Evans (r), Dorking, Surrey, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Simon Harris (l)

40-year badge



Neil Stafford (r), Buckingham fire station on-call, receives his 40-year badge from brigade organiser **Kieron Thomas**, with brigade chair **Tony Brandon**, brigade secretary **Chris Wycherley**, Bucks brigade committee and West Ashland fire station crew



Wayne Nelhams (r), Stratton fire station, Dorset and Wiltshire, receives his 25-year badge from **Gareth Francis** (l) with retained colleagues



Ronnie Silverston (r), branch secretary, Crewe Toll fire station, Edinburgh, receives 25-year badge from branch chair **Chris O'Neill** (l)



Jeffrey Kenny (l), blue watch, Brentwood, Essex receives his 25-year badge from previous brigade secretary **Andy Knowles**



Treece Birch (centre l) and **Steve Baxendale** (centre r), green watch, South Shore, Lancashire, receive their 25-year badges from brigade chair **Dave Shaw** (r) and branch sec **Baz Fernandez** (l)

Please send high resolution digital files or prints to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE

For your image to look its best, we need the original, full-resolution image. One lifted from a website may not do justice to a unique occasion. We do our best with images that are low resolution, taken directly into a bright light or suffer from camera-shake, or have other problems, but cannot perform miracles. Please include details for each image – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where/when it was taken.

FBU REGIONAL OFFICES

REGION 1 Scotland

52 St Enoch Square, Glasgow,
Scotland G1 4AA
0141 221 2309, 01rs@fbu.org.uk

REGION 2 N Ireland

14 Bachelors Walk, Lisburn,
Co Antrim, BT28 1XJ
02892 664622, 02rs@fbu.org

REGION 3 Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear

1 Carlton Court, 5th Avenue, Team
Valley, Gateshead, NE11 0AZ
0191 487 4142, 03rs@fbu.org.uk

REGION 4 Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire

9 Marsh Street, Rothwell,
Leeds, LS26 0AG
0113 288 7000, 04rs@fbu.org.uk

REGION 5 Greater Manchester, Lancs, Isle of Man, Cumbria, Merseyside, Cheshire

The Lighthouse, Lower Mersey St,
Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 2AL
0151 357 4400, 05rs@fbu.org.uk

REGION 6 Derbyshire, Notts, Lincs, Leics, Northants

The Waterside Offices, Pavilion Road, West
Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5FA
Region06@fbu.org.uk

REGION 7 West Mids, Staffs, Warks, Hereford & Worcester, Shropshire

195/7 Halesowen Rd, Old Hill,
West Midlands, B64 6HE
01384 413633, 07rs@fbu.org.uk

REGION 8 Mid and West Wales, North Wales, South Wales

2nd floor, Hastings House, Fitzalan
Court, Cardiff, CF24 0BL
029 2049 6474

REGION 9 Herts, Beds, Cambs, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk

28 Atlantic Square, Station Road,
Witham, Essex, CM8 2TL
01376 521521, 09rs@fbu.org.uk

REGION 10 London

Alpha House, 100 Borough High Street.,
London SE1 1LB
020 7359 3638, london@fbu.org.uk

REGION 11 East Sussex, Kent, Surrey, West Sussex

Unit 11, Hunns Mere Way,
Woodingdean, Brighton, BN2 6AH
11rs@fbu.org.uk

REGION 12 Bucks, Berks, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Oxfordshire

Eleanor Marx House,
Unit 2, 12 Richfield Place,
Reading, RG1 8EQ

REGION 13 Avon, Cornwall, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire, Gloucestershire

158 Muller Road, Horfield,
Bristol, BS7 9RE
0117 235 7605, 13rs@fbu.org.uk

Change of address or next of kin

Advise your brigade organiser of any change of address and head office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

England, Wales and N Ireland

0808 100 6061

Scotland 0800 089 1331

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues. For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.



THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS



**SOME THINGS
JUST AREN'T
ALRIGHT TO SAY**



LEADING THE FIGHT FOR
A FAIRER FIRE SERVICE

EQUALITY

MATTERS

ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL
FAIRNESS AT WORK POLICY

